

SECRETTHE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

DDI-150-75

16 JAN 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : The Maritime Balance

REFERENCE : Secretary of Defense Memorandum entitled
"The Maritime Balance," dated 15 December 1974

1. On 16 December the Secretary of Defense sent you a memorandum entitled "The Maritime Balance," which transmitted a detailed study prepared by OASD (PA&E) on the naval balance between the US and the USSR. In that memorandum's last paragraph, the Secretary of Defense invited those to whom it and its attachment had been sent for information to comment on it directly to you.
2. The views of the Intelligence Community on matters related to this subject are contained in the recently completed National Intelligence Estimate entitled "Soviet Naval Policy and Programs" (NIE 11-15-74), issued on 23 December 1974. Though the Intelligence Community's views with respect to the threat posed by the Soviet Navy generally accord with the judgments expressed in the PA&E's "Maritime Balance" study, there are some significant differences. In part, these differences derive from the fact that the analysis and evidence reflected in the National Intelligence Estimate post-dates by several months the intelligence portion of the PA&E study.
3. The NIE and the PA&E study both conclude that Soviet naval forces potentially available for unilateral intervention are less than those of the US at this time. The NIE and the PA&E study, however, differ in their assessment of future trends in relative Soviet-US capabilities in this sphere. The study suggests that US and Soviet capabilities are converging. The Intelligence Community's view, as reflected in the NIE, is that Soviet capabilities are not growing as fast as suggested in the study and, hence, that these relevant capabilities are not now converging.

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4. The study's pages dealing with improvements in Soviet underway replenishment capabilities seem to us to overstate the growth of what is a rather limited area of Soviet naval art. As indicated in the NIE, we believe Soviet underway replenishment capabilities are growing slowly and started from a very small base. Hence, the Intelligence Community believes that for the foreseeable future, the Soviets will not have an underway replenishment force capable of providing support analogous to that which the US Navy receives from its support forces.

5. On the other hand, evidence now available does indicate that the Soviets will soon have a perceptibly improved capability for attacking US surface ships in the open ocean. The first BACKFIRE strike aircraft have now been deployed to the Soviet Navy. The BACKFIRE is able to operate at ranges that far exceed those of the BADGER and BLINDER which comprise the present strike capability of Soviet naval aviation. For reconnaissance and strike purposes, BACKFIRES will be capable of operating in the Mediterranean, over the North Atlantic at least as far as Newfoundland, and as far as Hawaii in the Pacific.

6. The three points just covered represent the only major differences between the Intelligence Community's current views and those reflected in the OASD (PA&E) study with respect to the Soviet naval threat. There are many minor differences but none of these impact seriously on the study's overall judgments. The areas of agreement between the recent NIE and the study are far greater than the differences, and include an essentially similar overall appreciation of Soviet ASW and anti-carrier strike capabilities.

7. NIE 11-15-74 and the PA&E study should be regarded as complementary documents with many common elements, even though they do disagree at some points. These areas of disagreement should be kept in proportion and certainly do not reflect a fundamental divergence of opinion between the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community. The intelligence components of the Defense Department, of course, participated fully in the preparation of the NIE (and drafted large portions of it). That sets forth the views of all members of the Intelligence Community, including -- in a few footnotes on specific matters -- the points at which there are differing opinions within the Community.

George A. Carver, Jr.

W. E. Colby
Director

cc: Secretary of Defense

(16 January 1975)

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